

Employee Benefits Survey

Technical Note

The Employee Benefits Survey (EBS) of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) covers the incidence and characteristics of employee benefit plans, and is conducted jointly with the Bureau's Employment Cost Index Survey. The two surveys cover all private sector establishments (except farms and private households) and State and local governments.

The survey covers full- and part-time employees in the 50 States and District of Columbia. However, industrial and establishment size coverage varies on a rotating basis. In even-numbered reference years, EBS data are collected for small private establishments (those employing fewer than 100 workers) and State and local governments (regardless of employment size). In odd-numbered years, data are collected for medium and large private establishments (those employing 100 workers or more).

Occupational groups

Within each surveyed establishment, data are collected for a sample of all occupations in the establishment. The occupations are selected randomly; the probability of any occupation's selection is related to its employment size relative to total employment in the surveyed establishment.

Benefit areas

BLS requests that surveyed establishments provide data for the sample occupations' work schedules and details of plans in each of the following benefit areas: Paid holidays; vacations; personal leave, funeral leave, military leave, sick leave, jury duty leave, and paid and unpaid family leave; sickness and accident insurance; long-term disability insurance; medical, dental, and vision care; life insurance; defined benefit pension plans; defined contribution plans; flexible benefit plans; and reimbursement accounts.

Data are also collected on the incidence of the following additional benefits: Severance pay, supplemental unemployment benefits, travel accident insurance, nonproduction cash bonuses, child care, elder care, long-term care insurance, wellness programs, recreation facilities, job-related and nonjob-related educational assistance, employee assistance programs, financial counseling, subsidized commuting, sabbatical leave, stock option plans, stock purchase plans, and cash profit-sharing plans.

Survey estimation methods

The survey design uses an estimator that assigns the inverse of each surveyed establishment's probability of selection as a weight to its data. Three weight-adjustment factors are applied to the establishment data. The first factor is introduced to account for establishment nonresponse and the second for occupational nonresponse. A third poststratification factor is introduced to adjust the estimated employment totals to actual counts of the employment by industry for the survey reference date.

There are two procedures used to adjust for missing data from responding establishments. First, imputations for the number of plan participants are made for cases in which this number is not reported. Each of these participant values is imputed by selecting a similar plan from another establishment with similar employment in a similar industry. The participation rate from this selected plan is then used to approximate the number of participants for the plan that is missing a participation value.

Second, imputations for plan provisions are made when they are not available because of an establishment's partial response. These plan provisions are imputed by selecting provisions from a plan from another establishment with similar characteristics.

Regular publications

Estimates from the EBS are published in three bulletins: *Employee Benefits in Small Private Establishments*; *Employee Benefits in Medium and Large Private Establishments*; and *Employee Benefits in State and Local Governments*.

To meet the needs of data users interested in specific benefit topics, EBS data are used to prepare three series of short publications: *Understanding Employee Benefits* is a popularly written series of flyers covering benefits. *Employee Benefits Briefs* are one-page highlights of benefits topics. *Issues in Labor Statistics* is a series of BLS occasional reports that presents information of current interest.

Information also may be obtained by writing the Employee Benefits Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Room 4160, Washington, DC 20212-0001.

Telephone: (202) 606-6222

Internet: <http://stats.bls.gov/ebshome.htm>

TABLE B-1. **Percent of full-time employees participating in selected retirement benefit programs by industry sector and size of establishment,¹ 1994-97**

Benefit	Civilian workforce	Private sector			State and local governments
		Total	Small establishments	Medium and large establishments	
Total (thousands)	91,132	78,225	39,816	38,409	12,907
Percent					
All retirement plans ²	67	62	46	79	96
Defined benefit pension	40	32	15	50	91
Defined contribution	42	47	38	57	9
Savings and thrift	27	31	23	39	2
Deferred profit-sharing	12	13	12	13	(³)
Employee stock ownership	2	3	1	5	(³)
Money purchase pension	6	6	4	8	7
Simplified employee pension	1	1	1	(⁴)	(³)
Deferred earnings arrangements:					
With employer contributions	31	35	24	46	7
Salary reduction	29	34	24	44	2
Savings and thrift	25	29	21	38	2
Deferred profit sharing	2	3	2	3	(³)
Other (money purchase pension and stock plans)	1	1	(³)	2	(⁴)
Deferral of profit sharing allocation ...	1	2	(⁴)	3	(³)
Other (contributions to money purchase plans on a pre-tax basis)	1	(⁴)	(⁴)	(³)	5
Without employer contributions	8	6	4	9	17

¹ Small private establishments include those employing less than 100 workers, 1996; medium and large private establishments include those employing 100 workers or more, 1997; and State and local governments, 1994.

² Includes defined benefit pension plans and defined contribution retirement plans. Some employees participated in both types of plans.

³ Data are not available.

⁴ Less than 0.5 percent.

TABLE B-2. Number and percent of full-time employees¹ participating in defined benefit pension plans with selected plan provisions, 1994-97

Plan provision	Private sector		State and local governments	
	Number (thousands)	Percent	Number (thousands)	Percent
Employees with a defined benefit pension plan	19,202	100	11,708	100
Basic provisions				
Employee contribution required	881	5	8,487	72
Benefits based on earnings	12,910	67	11,680	99
Benefits integrated with Social Security ..	9,470	49	441	4
Benefits subject to a maximum ²	6,308	33	2,864	24
Early retirement benefits	18,164	95	10,158	87
Disability retirement benefits	14,337	75	10,702	91
Benefits are portable	1,461	8	3,307	28
Post-retirement increases	2,473	13	7,214	62
Other provisions				
Supplements for:				
Normal retirement	857	4	159	1
Early retirement	1,332	7	36	(³)
Lump-sum survivor benefits:				
Pre-retirement	365	2	1,985	17
Post-retirement	764	4	2,268	19
Minimum benefits	705	4	472	4
Early retirement requires employer approval	554	3	32	(³)
Benefit restoration if spouse predeceases retiree	2,367	12	4,218	36

¹ Data are for private establishments with 100 or more workers, 1997; and State and local governments, 1994.

² Provisions that restrict benefits, such as a limit on the

number of years of service that can be used for the benefit computation.

³ Less than 0.5 percent.

TABLE B-3. Number and percent of full-time employees¹ participating in defined benefit pension plans with selected types of primary benefit formulas, 1994-97

Selected type of benefit formula ²	Private sector		State and local governments	
	Number (thousands)	Percent	Number (thousands)	Percent
Employees with a defined benefit pension plan	19,202	100	11,708	100
Percent of terminal earnings	10,812	56	11,626	99
With alternative formula ³	3,720	19	2,151	18
Percent of career earnings	2,098	11	54	(⁴)
With alternative formula ³	605	3	2	(⁴)
Dollar amount	4,453	23	28	(⁴)

¹ Data are for private establishments with 100 or more workers, 1997; and State and local governments, 1994.

² Not shown separately are several types of private formulas, including percent of contribution, cash accounts, and others that are not easily classifiable.

³ Alternative formulas generally are designed to provide a minimum benefit to employees with short service or low earnings.

⁴ Less than 0.5 percent.

TABLE B-4. Number and percent of full-time employees¹ participating in defined benefit pension plans with selected age and service requirement for normal retirement², 1994-97

Age and service requirement	Private sector		State and local governments	
	Number (thousands)	Percent	Number (thousands)	Percent
Employees with a defined benefit pension plan	19,202	100	11,708	100
Any age	889	5	5,075	43
Less than 30 years of service	3	(³)	764	7
30 years of service	816	4	2,666	23
More than 30 years of service	70	(³)	1,645	14
Age 55	1,149	6	2,504	21
Less than 30 years of service	644	3	1,110	9
30 years of service	465	2	1,246	11
More than 30 years of service	40	(³)	149	1
Age 60	1,741	9	631	5
Less than 5 years of service	559	3	197	2
5 and less than 10 years of service	197	1	241	2
10 and less than 25 years of service	558	3	120	1
25 and less than 30 years of service	94	(³)	20	(³)
30 years of service	332	2	53	(³)
More than 30 years of service	—	—	—	—
Age 62	4,327	23	712	6
Less than 5 years of service	651	3	24	(³)
5 and less than 10 years of service	676	3	45	(³)
10 and less than 25 years of service	2,730	14	640	5
25 and less than 30 years of service	128	1	3	(³)
30 years of service	141	1	(³)	(³)
More than 30 years of service	—	—	—	—
Age 65	9,299	48	994	8
Less than 5 years of service	5,738	30	263	2
5 and less than 10 years of service	2,916	15	329	3
10 years of service	556	3	401	3
More than 10 years of service	89	(³)	—	—
Age plus service equals ⁴	1,520	8	1,364	12
Less than 80	347	2	22	(³)
80	230	1	510	4
81 to 89	886	5	126	1
90	57	(³)	464	4
More than 90	—	—	241	2

¹ Data are for private establishments with 100 or more workers, 1997; and State and local governments, 1994.

² Normal retirement is defined as the point at which the participant could retire and immediately receive all accrued benefits by virtue of service and earnings, without reduction due to age. If a plan had alternative age and service requirements, the earliest age and associated service were tabulated; if one

alternative did not specify an age, it was the requirement tabulated.

³ Less than 500 employees or less than 0.5 percent.

⁴ In some plans, participants also must satisfy a minimum age or service requirement.

NOTE: Dash indicates no employees in this category

TABLE B-5. **Number and percent of full-time employees¹ participating in defined benefit pension plans by employee contribution requirement, 1994-97**

Employee contribution requirement	Private sector		State and local governments	
	Number (thousands)	Percent	Number (thousands)	Percent
Employees with a defined benefit pension plan	19,202	100	11,708	100
Contribution required	881	5	8,487	72
Pre-tax contribution allowed	135	1	5,478	47
Pre-tax contribution prohibited	746	4	3,008	26
No contribution required	18,216	95	3,222	28

¹ Data are for private establishments with 100 or more workers, 1997; and State and local governments, 1994.

TABLE B-6. **Number and percent of full-time employees¹ participating in savings and thrift retirement plans with selected plan provisions, 1997**

Selected plan provision	Number (thousands)	Percent
Employees with a savings and thrift retirement plan	14,882	100
Pre-tax contributions allowed	14,577	98
Transfer/rollover contributions allowed	7,877	53
Investment choices for:		
Employee contributions	12,933	87
Employer contributions	9,702	65
Immediate full vesting	4,373	29
Loans allowed	7,963	54
Withdrawals allowed	7,792	52

¹ Data are for private establishments with 100 or more workers.

TABLE B-7. Number and percent of full-time employees¹ participating in savings and thrift retirement plans by maximum² employee contribution,³ 1997

Maximum employee contribution	Number (thousands)	Percent
All employees with a savings and thrift retirement plan	14,882	100
Limited percent of earnings	13,249	89
5 or less	327	2
6 and less than 10	594	4
10	1,011	7
11 and less than 15	2,074	15
15	4,844	33
16	2,554	17
More than 16	1,845	11
Specified dollar amount	112	1
Up to Internal Revenue Code limit	1,511	10
Not determinable	10	(⁴)

¹ Data are for private establishments with 100 or more workers.

² The maximum contribution averaged 13.7 percent of earnings in all plans. In plans that established a maximum based on a percent of earnings, the maximum averaged 14.3 percent.

³ Includes contributions that are not matched by the employer. If maximum contributions vary, such as by length of service, the highest possible contribution was tabulated.

⁴ Less than 0.5 percent.

TABLE B-8. Percent of full-time employees¹ participating in savings and thrift retirement plans by employer matching contribution, 1997

Percent of employee contribution to be matched ²	Employer matching contribution					
	Specific matching percent					Variable match rate ³
	All fixed	1-49	50	51-99	100	
Total	81	20	38	11	12	19
Up to 2	4	2	1	—	(⁴)	(⁵)
Over 2 and up to 3	8	1	2	1	4	(⁵)
Over 3 and up to 4	13	3	8	(⁴)	2	(⁵)
Over 4 and up to 5	8	2	4	(⁴)	2	(⁵)
Over 5 and up to 6	39	9	21	6	2	(⁵)
Over 6	9	3	3	3	(⁴)	(⁵)

¹ Data are for 14,882,299 full-time employees participating in savings and thrift plans who were employed in private establishments with 100 or more workers.

² Employee may contribute a percent of salary up to a specified maximum; ceilings on contributions to be matched by employers can be lower than maximum allowable contributions. If maximum contributions vary, such as by length of service, the highest possible

contribution was tabulated.

³ Employer contributions may vary by employee length of service, amount of employee contribution, investment choice, and profit level.

⁴ Less than 0.5 percent.

⁵ Data are not available.

NOTE: Dash indicates no employees in this category